



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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TREE-PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE GRANTS AVAILABLE

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is accepting grant applications for tree planting and maintenance projects on publicly owned property. The Community Improvement through Healthy Trees grants will award between \$500 and \$2,500 in matching funds to community organizations and local governments.

Successful grant applicants will emphasize volunteer involvement, outreach efforts in low to moderate-income neighborhoods and communities, and projects taking place in parks, schools, and other high-use areas. Applications are due by Feb. 21, and successful applicants will be notified in March. Tree planting projects must be completed by June 30 and maintenance projects will be completed by Sept. 1.

The DNR will be providing approximately \$60,000 of USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry funds and \$10,000 of DNR Keepers of the Land funds to sponsor a matching grant for tree planting as well as tree maintenance and improvement projects in Iowa communities. Grant recipients will be required to document project expenditures equal to or exceeding the amount of the grant.

Applications can be downloaded from www.iowadnr.com/forestry/ then click on “Community and Yard Trees.” For more information or to request a paper copy of the application, contact Matt Brewer, forestry volunteer coordinator (515-242-6892, Matt.Brewer@dnr.state.ia.us) or Randy Cook, urban forester (515-281-5600, Randy.Cook@dnr.state.ia.us). The Iowa DNR’s Keepers of the Land program promotes volunteerism in protecting and enhancing our natural resources (see www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/index.html).

For more information, please contact Matt Brewer at 515-242-6892 or Randy Cook at 515-281-5600.

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OAKS GALORE

The mighty oak provides food and shelter to nearly 80 species of Iowa wildlife. Squirrels, deer, rabbits, raccoon, opossums and turkey feast each fall and throughout the winter on acorns. Even birds including quail, pheasant, blue jay, thrush, and the little nuthatch peck out the acorn meat.

Oaks are treasured for its stately growth, beautiful lumber and, of course, its acorns. A mature oak can produce more than 20 bushels of acorns in a good year, which occurs every 3 to 5 years.

“In our native woodlands, common species are bur, red, white, black and pin oaks,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the DNR’s forestry bureau. “Not only animals and birds take advantage of the good years, the Department of Natural Resources State Forest Nursery buys over 2,000 bushels of acorns.”

After growing in the nursery, one million oak seedlings are ready for planting across the state. Some are planted in DNR parks, wildlife areas and state forests. But the remaining seedlings are available for purchase to anyone with land wanting to create a small forest for their own planting. Oak and other native species can be ordered from the State Forest Nursery. Call 800 865-2477 or <http://www.iowadnr.com/forestry/nursery.html> for information. The minimum order is 500 seedlings which may be used for wildlife habitat and reforestation plantings.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-281-5441.

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TAXES AND WILDLIFE

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Sooner or later, you’ll do them. The filing deadline is months away, but the W-2s are arriving. The filing software is on the shelves and appointments are being made with the accountants. It’s tax time.

As you wade through the world of ‘filing status,’ ‘health insurance deductions’ and ‘total amount due,’ keep an eye peeled for the box that has been a major boost for wildlife protection in the last quarter century in Iowa. The ‘chickadee’ may be missing, but the ‘checkoff’ is still there.

Checkoff dollars earmarked through Iowa’s Fish & Wildlife Protection Fund have gone toward otter releases, songbird research, classroom education and a variety of other projects designed to promote ‘nongame’ wildlife; those species not directly affected by hunting, fishing or furharvesting fees or excise taxes related to so-called ‘consumptive’ recreation.

In the early years, the ‘Chickadee Checkoff’ logo in the margin marked the spot for designating a few dollars to go toward the fund. As more checkoffs were added, though, the logo disappeared. So did a big chunk of the funding. “In the early years, it was around \$220,000. When other checkoffs were added, though, it took a big drop for the next year or two,” recalls Department of Natural Resources wildlife diversity coordinator Doug Harr. “It’s leveled out at about \$140,000, but we have worked closely with tax preparers and accountants to get the word out, so it doesn’t drop any more. It seems to be at a stable level, now.”

Deer and pheasants; bass and bluegill and the few dozen other *game* species get most of the attention from the outdoors crowd. License sales and excise taxes are the motor that drives that engine. Research and habitat management are most often geared toward them. A few ‘nongame’ animals; bald eagles, trumpeter swans and otters gain a foothold through their unique situation or showy physique. However more than 500 other critters; from snail darters to Indiana bats to salamanders, Henslow’s sparrows and fox snakes have to eke out an existence between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, too. They are the species most reliant on the kindness of strangers, come tax time.

However, that kindness doesn’t spread too far. Research on the Iowa checkoff shows an average \$11.50 contribution from approximately 1 percent of us as we file income tax returns. Compare that with studies that show 45 percent of us engage in wildlife watching activities and you can see a discrepancy about the size of the Loess Hills. ‘Nongame’ contributions have helped pay for research and surveys on frogs and toads, wintering bald eagles, heron rookeries, bats, and Iowa’s raptors in the past couple years. Funding for Bald Eagle Days and other public events also received a hand.

And while checkoff dollars are the backbone of the wildlife diversity program budget, there is help ahead. A boost in the fee for buying or renewing the ‘natural resources’ license plate; the custom plate featuring Iowa’s goldfinch and wild rose, will be used as a match for federal dollars that bring a major infusion of wildlife help. Up to \$800,000 hinges on the ability of Iowa to come up with one-to-one matches for the federal funding. The checkoff dollars still provide the day to day budget, but the increase in the custom plate fees means a stable source of funding—finally—for a program besieged by budget woes in the last quarter century.

“We hope to do more with reptiles, amphibians, songbirds, a new small fish survey conducted in southwest Iowa, along wadable streams,” stresses Harr. “There are other areas we want to do more habitat protection in, especially in some of our Bird Conservation Areas across Iowa.”

Like most sources from the federal government, though, that money is in hot demand. Not only does Iowa have to match it to get it; it has to go through the renewal fight every budget cycle. At present, there is no guaranteed source several years down the road. And that’s something the outdoor crowd; ‘nonconsumptives’ as well as hunters, anglers and furharvesters will hear more about in the months ahead.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of February 1, 2005

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Ice fishing reports will be released every other week while quality ice conditions exist for the remainder of the ice fishing season.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing has been fair right before sunrise and after sunset. The areas south of the footbridge and around Big Stoney Point have produced some nice fish. Downsize the bait and the jigging because the fish are not aggressive. Small jigging minnow style baits and spoons tipped with minnow heads should do the trick. Yellow perch fishing is slow. Crappie and bluegill fishing has been good at the North Grade around the lily pads. The best fishing is one-half hour before sunset and early mornings. Crappies are 10 to 11 inches and bluegills are 7 to 9 inches.

West Lake Okoboji (Dickinson): Some yellow perch are being caught in Miller’s and Emerson bays. Look for sand close to vegetation and use teardrops tipped with wigglers or wax worms. A few walleyes are being caught on the north end and on some of the deep rocks off Pocahontas Point. A few panfish are being caught in Emerson Bay and at the north end. Find deep weed lines or big pockets in the weeds for the best results. Teardrops tipped with minnows have worked best. Anglers are catching a few northern pike on the north end and in Miller’s Bay using tip ups.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing has slowed some. Look for other options away from the crowd. The bite has been sporadic to good. Fish have been caught in the middle of the day and in the middle of the night.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Yellow bass fishing is good to excellent. Fish the late afternoon and the early evening for the best action. Jigging spoons tipped with minnow heads is working all over the lake.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Walleye fishing is fair west of College Island in the evening. Use live minnows and jigging spoons tipped with minnows. Remember there is a 15-inch minimum length limit on walleyes.

Brushy Creek (Webster): Walleye fishing is best at sunrise and sunset. A few nice walleyes have been caught on jigging spoons tipped with a minnow. Bluegills are hugging the bottom in 15 to 25 feet of water.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Walleye fishing is good using jigging spoons and minnows. Fish the aeration system areas, the artificial weeds and the east shore around sunrise and set for the best action. Remember the 14-inch length limit on walleyes. Yellow bass are being caught northeast of the Island, the artificial weeds and the aeration system areas on small spoons and minnows. White bass are being caught in the same areas as the yellow bass.

Indian Lake, Eldred Sherwood Park (Hancock): Bluegills are biting on small jigs tipped with wax worms.

Smith Lake (Kossuth): Bluegills are hitting on small jigs and wax worms. Sorting is required, but 6 to 8-inch fish are available.

Briggs Woods (Hamilton): Bluegill fishing is good using small jigs tipped with wax worms.

Rice Lake (Winnebago and Worth): Yellow perch are fair. The fish seem to be on the move so try different locations if fishing is slow. Morning seems to hold the most action.

Silver Lake (Worth): Yellow perch fishing is fair around the jetty and the campground using minnows. Sorting is required, but 7 to 9-inch fish are available.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Don Williams (Boone): Bluegills are good using jigs and wax worms around cedar trees south of the ramp in the main lake. Crappies are good using jigs and minnows.

Big Creek (Polk): Bluegill fishing is slow during the day using tear-drops and wax worms in the Lost Lake area near the spillway. Crappie fishing is good late in the day and at night using jigs and wax worms or minnows. Walleye fishing is good, primarily at night in 35 to 40-feet of water using minnows.

Below Saylorville Dam (Polk): Anglers are picking up nice sized walleyes on lead heads with twister bodies.

Easter Lake (Polk): Bluegill fishing has been good with jigs and wax worms, although there are a number of smaller fish being caught. Crappie fishing has been good with jigs and minnows. Best areas are off the face of the dam.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Bluegill fishing has been fair using jigs and wax worms. Crappie fishing has been fair to good using jigs and minnows. Anglers have been scattered across most of the lake.

Hickory Grove (Story): Crappies are good on minnows in the evening. Fishing is fair for 7 to 8-inch bluegills using small jigs/hooks and wax worms. The better fishing areas have been around structure, trees and/or pallets.

Dakins Lake Park (Story): Fishing is good for 6 to 7-inch bluegills.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill and redear fishing has been fair to good using jigs or hooks with worms and wax worms.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been fair using wax worms and jigs.

Banner Lake (Warren): Trout fishing has been very good since the final winter stocking on Jan. 18.

Mormon Trail (Adair): Bluegills of all sizes are good. Crappies are fair tipping a jig with a minnow.

Nodaway (Adair): Bluegill fishing is good with fish averaging 7 to 8 inches. Crappies are fair using minnows in late afternoon.

Greenfield (Adair): Bluegill and crappie fishing is slow. Silt basin above the lake is good for bluegills in the 6 to 7-inch range.

Orient (Adair): Crappies are good jigging minnows in 8 to 10 feet of water.

Littlefield (Audubon): Bluegill and crappie are good on wax worms.

DeSoto (Harrison): Crappie fishing is good using minnows around structure in late afternoon. Bluegills are being caught but most are small.

Willow (Harrison): Bluegills in the 7 to 8 inch range are being caught using wax worms. Crappies are slow but some are being caught using minnows in the evening.

Viking (Montgomery): Bluegill fishing is good using teardrop and wax worm around structure. Crappies are fair using minnows in early morning and late afternoon. Anglers are catching 5 to 7-inch yellow bass on jigs tipped with minnows.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Bluegills are being caught, but most are small. Catfishing is good in afternoon using dead minnows. Ice conditions have improved to 10-12 inches of ice.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Small bluegills are being caught with jigs and tear drops tipped with wax worms. Crappie fishing is excellent for 7-inch fish around structure in 8 to 10 feet of water.

Three Mile (Union): Ice is good in most places. Bluegill and crappie can be caught from several spots all over the lake. Timbered creek channels or the deeper brush piles seem to be the best. Some walleye and yellow perch are being picked up on minnows from the deeper trees. Minnows or wax worms are the most reliable bait

Fogle (Ringgold): Ice thickness is variable from 3 to 11 inches thick. A lot of 7 to 8-inch bluegill can be caught in the lower portion of the lake along the creek channel or over the brush pile. Some crappies are being caught on minnows. Morning and evenings hours seem to be the best but some are caught all day long.

Little River (Decatur): Some crappie and bluegill can be caught in the creek channel midway up the lake. Ice is 5 to 7 inches in most areas. Some walleye are being caught.

Walnut Creek Marsh (Ringgold): Large bluegill and crappie are being caught along the south dike channel or around the stumps in 3 to 4 feet of water.

Farm Ponds: Farm ponds have been doing very well. Ice conditions are more suitable with most ponds having 10 to 12 inches of ice and several inches of snow. Anglers are catching bluegill and crappie using teardrops tipped with wax worm. Ponds that have produced large bluegill historically are producing large numbers of fish.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: The Mississippi River is opening up again so anglers should use caution ice fishing on the lower pools. Anglers are targeting bluegills and crappies and fishing has been fair on the backwaters where better ice conditions exist. The morning and the hours just before sunset are best. Remember to check the ice conditions frequently since river ice can be variable. In **Pool 16**, Sunset Harbor continues to be fair for bluegills and crappies using jigs tipped with wax worms and minnows. Sorting is required for larger fish. In **Pool 17**, fishing has been good in Muscatine in the tailwater area below Lock and Dam 16 for sauger and walleye using jigs tipped with minnows. In **Pool 19**, the Cheney Creek area has been good for catfish from the shore. Fishing has been fair for bluegills and crappies at Wildcat Springs and the Nauvoo area.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Bluegills are willing to bite, but are on the small side. Anglers are catching a few crappies. Use small jigs tipped with wax worms around the deeper brush piles for both species.

Hannen Lake (Benton): Decent numbers of bluegills are being taken on jig/wax worm combos. The most popular areas are off the dam and out in front of the shop. Use caution when fishing. The lake level is being slowly raised and ice conditions will be variable.

Kent Park (Johnson): Bluegill and crappie fishing has been moderate, with an occasional bass and catfish caught as a bonus.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Bluegills and crappies are being caught but not in large numbers. Early in the day seems to be the best time. Look for deeper brush and stake beds.

Rodgers Lake (Benton): Bluegills and an occasional crappie are being caught on small jigs/wax worms. Fish the deeper brush piles for best results.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been biting on small jigs tipped with wax worms and on artificial presentations. Honey Creek, South Fork and Buck Creek have been the best areas.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Bluegill and crappie fishing has been slow. The best success has been with small jigs tipped with wax worms. Find areas with structure for the best success.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a wax worm. Anglers report anywhere from 4 to 9 inches of ice.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Bluegills and an occasional crappie have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a wax worm. The most productive area has been in the Wolf Hollow arm. The bluegills have been holding around the sunken cedar trees in that area. Some areas are holding more fish than others are, so move until you find fish.

Lake Darling (Washington): Crappie fishing has been fair along the creek channel running up the southwest shoreline to the campground.

Lake Geode (Henry): Anglers are catching some nice bluegills along the creek channel in the upper half of the lake. Use an orange teardrop tipped with a wax worm and fish in 10 to 12 feet of water.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Crappie fishing has been fair in Sand Run. Try around the stump fields at the lower end or the tree falls in the upper end of Sand Run for the best luck.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): Bluegill fishing has cooled a little and is just fair. Work the trees along the old creek channel. The fish are suspended at the 10 to 12-foot mark.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Ice conditions are favorable in most locations in northeast Iowa, but as always, be cautious when crossing flowing channels or sloughs. Reports of ice fishing success are mixed—a common occurrence with angling in the middle of winter. Crappies are being reported at various locations in the deeper backwater areas. Almost all successful anglers report catching suspended crappies by relying heavily on vexilars or similar equipment to find suspended fish. In **Pool 9** good locations include DeSoto and Minnesota Slough. In **Pool 10**, some crappies and bluegills are being reported in the Prairie du Chien areas such as Ambrough Slough; however, good reports are scattered with many small bluegills being reported. Bussey Lake (**Pool 10**) has also seen some good action at times with bluegills and crappies. In **Pool 11**, Swift Slough has been mostly slow, with a few good reports, and Mud Lake has been good with more than usual ice fishing activity. Brown's Lake (**Pool 13**) has been fair to good for bluegill and crappie. Fish the lower section of Browns Lake for best success. Lower Sabula Lake (**Pool 13**) is fair for bluegill and crappie in the deeper dredge cuts. Anglers are catching crappies and a few small, yellow perch in Spring Lake (**Pool 13**). Some crappie and bluegill are being caught in Rock Creek (**Pool 14**)—again, the size of the fish is small.

Volga Lake (Fayette): Bluegill fishing is fair. For best results, suspend an ice jig tipped with a wax worm in the deeper water next to sunken brush piles.

Alice Wyth, Big Woods, Fisher, George Wyth, and South Prairie lakes (Black Hawk): Crappie and bluegill fishing is fair during the early morning or late evening hours.

Farm Ponds (Delaware): Bluegill fishing is good in area farm ponds.

Heritage Pond (Dubuque) and **North Prairie Lake** (Black Hawk): Rainbow trout fishing is very good.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-926-3276.

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